The LAA and education for librarianship

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The purpose of this paper is to describe the present pattern of education for librarianship in Australia at the base professional level and for library technicians, and to discuss the role of the Library Assocation of Australia in setting standards and assessing courses.

Historical development

The historical development of education for librarianship in Australia has been well documented[1] and need not concern us here. It will be sufficient for me to summarise the history very briefly so that the present may be seen in its proper perspective.

The LAA was established in 1937 as the Australian Institute of Librarians. 'Library training' (as it was then called) was high on the list of priorities for the new organisation, and a Board of Examination and Certification was formed to construct a syllabus of study and a system of national examinations. The first candidates sat in 1944. Originally there were two separate levels of examination, the Preliminary and the Qualifying, but in 1961 the Preliminary level was abolished and a single Registration Examination of nine papers replaced the former two. The Association provides a syllabus and reading list but no tuition, although voluntary classes are regularly organised by the larger libraries and by some State branches of the Association.

For more than thirty years it has been the Association's policy that education for the profession should be conducted in institutions of tertiary education. In 1960 our first tertiary library schol opened its doors at the University of New South Wales. This lead was followed by the non-university tertiary institutions which are generally known as Colleges of Advanced Education. Only two other universities have embraced the teaching of librarianship at the base professional level. One, the University of Adelaide, had only a brief flirtation and was forced by political and economic pressures to strangle its library school only a few years after birth. The other, Monash University in Melbourne, has been offering a higher degree for several years and will commence this year a course at the base level.

Now, after twenty years of growth there are sixteen tertiary institutions in Australia teaching librarianship at the base professional level.

With tertiary courses so widely available — some would say too widely available — the LAA's own examinations have become a 'second best' way in which to qualify for the profession, and are accordingly being phased out. The last examination will be held this year.

As a final paragraph in this brief historical overview I should refer to the training of para-professional staff, normally called library technicians. Until very recently the middle grades in most libraries were occupied, first, by those with the old Preliminary Certificate, and later by those proceeding through the nine papers of the Registration Examination. In 1970 the first course specifically designed for library technicians was established, and there are now courses at this level in every Australian state.

The Australian pattern

From this brief history of developments you will already have discerned the skeleton of our present educational pattern. It is time to put flesh on those bare bones.

Figure 1
Basic Pattern of Education for Librarianship in Australia

Higher Qualifications	Doctorate Master's degrees Specialist diplomas
Base-level Professional Qualifications	Registration Examination, LAA Post-graduate diploma Master's degree Bachelor's degree 'Specialist' courses for teacher-librarians
Para-professional	Library technician's certificate

Fig. 1 summarises the present three-tiered structure of education for librarianship in Australia. At the top are a modest selection of qualifications above the base level, then a rather wider range of routes to professional qualification, and at the bottom a para-professional qualification.

I want to look in more detail at the various routes to base-level qualification.

Essentially, there are four methods of qualifying at the base professional level. Any one of them can confer eligibility for Associateship of the LAA.

The Registration Examination concludes this year and need not be discussed further. An obituary may be premature, but it is important to note that the Registration, now so clearly a second-best way in which to qualify, was in its time a truly significant factor in the improvement of library service in Australia. Until 1960 it provided the only means of qualification — short of leaving the country — and it became accepted as a national standard for appointment, promotion, and industrial awards. It turned librarianship from the province of the well-read or well-meaning amateur into a respected profession. The Registration Examination system goes this year into an honorable retirement.

The other three routes to professional qualification require attendance at a school of librarianship in a tertiary institution. Courses are offered at both the postgraduate and undergraduate levels.

Figure 2
Base-level Qualifications

Professional

1. *Registration Examination.*	Offered by: LAA (private study) Duration: 9 papers Pre-requisite: Matriculation Note: Terminates at end of 1980.
2. *Postgraduate Diploma.*	Offered by: 1 university, various CAEs. Duration: 1 year (EFT) Pre-requisite: Bachelor's degree in subjects other than librarianship. Note: School librarians also require a qualification in education.
3. *Master's Degree.*	Offered by: 1 university Duration: 2 years (EFT) Pre-requisite: Bachelor's honours degree in subjects other than librarianship.
4. *Bachelor's Degree.*	Offered by: various CAEs Duration: 3 years (EFT) or 4 years for school librarianship specialisation. Pre-requisite: Matriculation Note: Combines the study of librarianship with other subjects.

Para-professional

1. *Library Technician's Certificate.*	Offered by: technical colleges Duration: 1 ½-2 years (EFT) Pre-requisite: normally Year 10 of High School.
2. *Associate Diploma.*	Offered by: 1 CAE Duration: 2 years (EFT) Pre-requisite: Year 12 of High School.

The postgraduate diploma is a one-year course in librarianship for those already possessing a bachelor's degree. An 'end-on' qualification of this type is a familiar approach and probably requires little further explanation.

Beginning this year, there is a most interesting alternative approach to postgraduate education for librarianship at the base level. Monash University has decided to follow a trend which is gathering strength in North America, namely, to extend the one-year postgraduate qualification to two years and to award a Master's degree upon completion. This is not a higher degree requiring a base-level professional qualification as pre-requisite, but is the base-level qualification itself. It will be interesting to see whether students will choose to do a two-year course when perfectly acceptable one-year courses are available; it will be interesting to see what employers make of the newly-minted professional applicant with a two-year Master's degree in competition with those with a one-year diploma; and it will be interesting to see whether other library schools follow the leader. Monash University is making history this year.

The Australian undergraduate degree in librarianship is also a somewhat unusual specimen. The first of them, established in the early 1960s, came in for their share of criticism and also of uncritical praise. The 'generalist' undergraduate course covers three years full-time or a proportionately longer period part-time, and combines the study of librarianship with other studies in the humanities, social sciences, or sciences. They are known as 'integrated' courses, and that word is important; the professional studies and those in complementary or peripheral disciplines are deliberately integrated so as to relate directly with each other, and reinforce each other. It is the integrated structure of these courses which is usually their most praised feature.

While admitting this, critics of the Australian undergraduate course accuse it of short-changing both professional and subject content. They point to the 'traditional' end-on arrangement, which takes four years, and ask how it is possible to achieve the same depth and breadth of study in three years. A decade or more ago this was an issue which inflamed passions in many bosoms and led to deep division within the LAA as it debated whether or not these undergraduate degrees should be an acceptable qualification. Supporters of the integrated undergraduate degree won that debate, and the wounds are mostly now healed, but some employers — particularly in the university libraries — refuse to accord holders of first awards in librarianship the same status or promotional opportunities as those with a traditional degree plus an end-on professional diploma. In the view of the LAA both groups are equally qualified for professional status.

This question of the period needed for adequate professional education continues to cause debate from time to time. In her Presidential Address to the 1977 LAA Conference Margaret Trask regretted the emphasis which has come to be placed on the time element, and called for a searching enquiry into the nature of librarianship and information, so that we may know what we need to teach. Only when this is defined can we meaningfully discuss how long it will take.[2] Others point to the recent trend in North America towards lengthening the period of study, and many teachers of librarianship are heard bemoaning the difficulty of fitting in new areas of study such as computers and audio-visual materials without emasculating other equally necessary subjects to make room.

The LAA Board of Education is well aware that the length of an educational program is less important than its content and intellectual quality, yet inclines to the view that a longer program is probably desirable. Certainly, though, we support Mrs Trask's call for a re-examination of the nature of what librarians need to know as a pre-requisite for any discussions on how long the educational program should be.

Another matter which has caused some dispute, and which continues to generate a healthy debate, is external studies.

The demand for external courses in librarianship has increased quite markedly in Australia in recent years, mostly as a result of the phasing-out of the Association's examination system. It is argued that, because almost all of the library schools are located in the capital cities, the cessation of the Registration Examination will have the effect of denying those who live elsewhere an opportunity to secure qualifications. The external offering of course is seen as the only solution to this problem. Others argue that most other professions (for example medicine, law, dentistry, even teaching) require attendance at a tertiary institution in a

capital city or large country centre, and ask why librarianship should be any different.

If it could be shown that librarianship can be taught just as effectively externally as internally then there is no *educational* reason for rejecting external studies. A research investigation recently carried out at Kuring-gai CAE under the direction of Margaret Trask supported the hypothesis that instruction in librarianship by external means results in learning which is as effective as that resulting from conventional face-to-face instructional methods.[3] Additionally, the fact that successful external courses in a wide range of subject fields have been taught by universities in Australia and other countries for many years certainly gives hope that it should be possible to develop a successful program to teach librarianship externally.

As a matter of policy, the LAA recognises the need for librarianship to be taught by external studies in order that high quality education for the profession should be more widely accessible. Several library schools offer some parts of their courses both internally and externally, and one offers all of its courses by both modes.

I have spoken so far about what we term 'generalist' courses — those preparing their students for work in public, academic, and special libraries. In addition to these courses there are 'specialist' courses in two fields, archives and school librarianship. We recognise archives as a specialism because of the different methodology of archives work, and we recognise school librarianship as a specialism because it calls for preparation in two fields — education and librarianship. Thus, courses for school librarians will normally need to be longer than those for 'generalists'. In practice this means that while the normal length of a generalist undergraduate course is three years, an undergraduate specialist course in school librarianship will normally take four years to complete; the postgraduate diploma courses for both groups are each of one year's duration but the school librarian is expected also to hold a qualification in education. These requirements parallel those of most employing authorities for school librarians.

This extended preparation was not always the case, and I think it is true to say that school librarianship has been one of the most difficult areas in library education with which the LAA has had to contend. You would find a historical recital of our problems both tedious and familiar, I think, but I will attempt a brief summary. The problem was brought into focus in 1969 when the federal government began a program of assistance to secondary school libraries, including funds to help meet the costs of educating more school librarians. Special grants were provided to enable qualified teachers to undertake short courses in librarianship prior to appointment as school librarians. The need for trained staff in school libraries was urgent and the Australian School Commission — an advisory body to the federal government — reported that it:

> does not believe that a period of full-time training greater than six months is required in most situations to equip a fully qualified teacher to function as a teacher-librarian. . . . In some cases . . . a shorter training period is appropriate.[4]

The Commission made funds available for courses of this type, but the LAA voiced its strong opinion that librarians in schools should be at least as well educated as their colleagues in other types of libraries. Fortunately library educators themselves echoed this view, and were instrumental in establishing in several CAEs courses of a truly professional calibre for school librarians. These courses are now available in every State, and the short 'retraining' courses in library techniques for teachers have disappeared. One shudders to think what would have happened to school library services if the view of the Schools Commission — that six months is plenty — had prevailed permanently.

Finally in this overview of the pattern of library education in Australia, let me turn now and consider the question of sub-professional library staff or, as they are more usually known, library technicians. This is a relatively new category of library worker in Australia; the library technician works between the clerical level and the professional level, and supports and assists the professional staff. He or she has been specially trained to occupy middle-level support positions. The duties performed in these positions are essentially practical in nature and therefore the library technician's training should be task-oriented.

The first Australian course for library technicians was established in 1970 and there are now courses in every State. Initially they developed along somewhat different lines, but in 1977 the LAA adopted its first standards for technician courses, incorporating a list of tasks which the technician should be able to perform and for which, therefore, the course of instruction should prepare him. There is now a welcome affinity between the courses which, among other things, will facilitate the mobility of library technicians from State to State.

It is the Association's view that the technician's course should be conducted quite separately from courses at the professional level. If it is not there is a real danger that the technician's course will turn out to be a watered-down or elementary version of a professional course when in reality the two types of education need to be quite differently based. Stated simply, the technician needs practical skills while the professional needs the theoretical background to enable him to determine what skills are required and how they might best be used. In Australia, in every case but one, courses for library technicians are conducted in technical colleges.

We are also of the view that the technician's course should be a terminal one, in that it should not be an automatic stepping-stone to professional qualification. Being differently based, it should not be thought of as an automatic equation with the early levels of a professional course. Nor should technicians be thought of as partly qualified professionals. They are library workers in their own right, with their own role to play which is quite separate and distinct from that of the professional librarian.

The role of the LAA Board of Education

Having described the present pattern of education for librarians and library technicians in Australia, I turn now to consider the role of the professional association, through its Board of Education.

The Board of Education, which has existed under several names and in several forms for forty years, comprises twelve members. Two are *ex officio* (the President and Executive Director) and the remaining ten are elected.

Simply stated, the Board's role is to set standards for courses, to assess courses against those standards, and to recognise (or accredit) courses which are found to meet the standards. Completion of a recognised course confers eligibility for Associateship of the LAA. Until the end of this year the Board will also be responsible for conducting the last of the Registration Examinations, but I will not discuss that dying duty here. The Board is also responsible for recommending outstanding individuals for the distinction of Fellow

of the LAA on the basis of a distinguished contribution to the theory or practice of their profession. This, too, is not relevant to the present discussion.

Setting standards

You will recall that Australia's first tertiary-level library school opened its doors at the University of New South Wales in 1960. The following year, the LAA resolved that those who had completed the examinations for the University's Diploma in Librarianship would be exempted from the Association's own examinations and thus automatically entitled to professional membership. This action marked a change of course for the Association — a change from examining to accepting the examinations of others.

Acceptance of the examinations of others, however, was not to be automatic. In 1964 the Association published its 'Minimum Standards for the Recognition of Courses in Librarianship' and in 1968 these were replaced with the 'Statement on the Recognition of Courses in Librarianship'. With some slight alterations the 1968 Statement is still current. It is published each year in the Association's *Handbook*.

The Statement sets out the criteria against which courses will be assessed. Although they are too detailed to reproduce here or to summarise with any clarity, the following highlights will give something of the flavour of the full document.

We expect, among other things:

1 Adequate accommodation and equipment.
2 A library adequate to support the teaching program.
3 Academic staff of high calibre, with appropriate qualifications and experience.
4 A minimum of 5 full-time staff, and a staff-student ratio of approximately 1:10.
5 Professional studies which include
   (a) the place of the library in society;
   (b) the library as an agency of communication;
   (c) the principles of bibliographic organisation;
   (d) the principles of collection building;
   (e) the principles of library management.

Our standards are couched in deliberately broad terms, because we want, if at all possible, to allow experimentation and innovation on the part of the library schools. Of course, innovation requires the catalyst of an innovator at the head of a school. We have been fortunate in having had a few of these in the right place at the right time, so there is a healthy diversity among the approaches taken.

The question of standards for external courses is particularly important. Quality external education is very expensive, and in hard times there can be a considerable temptation to do it cheaply. Obviously a purely correspondence course must be unacceptable. So, too, must an internal course presented unchanged externally. The problems of adapting an internal course successfully to the external mode are real and significant. The geographic isolation of many external students must be compensated for in a variety of ways. For example, they need alternative access to books and periodical articles, they need exposure to a variety of real library situations which are not to be found in or near their places of residence and, above all in my opinion, they need the opportunity to meet with their teachers and fellow students and to argue with them around a seminar table.

Our criteria for course recognition require external courses to meet all the standards of quality applied to internal courses. In addition, appropriate teaching methods, including personal contact between staff and students, and planned field work and visits to a variety of libraries, must be devised and supported. There can be no question of external studies being a 'second best' method of qualification.

The LAA has also established criteria for library technician courses. These follow the professional course criteria in such particulars as accommodation, staff, and library facilities, and, because of the practical nature of technicians' work, also specify a period of practical experience as an integral part of the course. The list of tasks deemed appropriate for technicians forms part of the standards, and each course is expected to provide training which will ensure that their graduates enter the workforce able to perform these tasks.

Assessment of courses

Having established the standards, a mechanism is needed to assess courses against them. Ted Flowers, the Convener of the Course Recognition Committee of the Board of Education, has recently published an article on our procedures,[5] so I will therefore be brief in my own description and comment.

The first point to note is that the LAA cannot initiate the assessment process. It must wait for a request to come from an institution for recognition of its course. The second point to note is that the Association believes that performance is a more reliable indicator of quality than is promise, and therefore we do not consider extending recognition to a course until it has been in operation for at least one year. As a guide to prospective students of a newly-established course we will make a preliminary assessment and will confer provisional recognition if it seems at all likely that the course would meet the standards after a year of operation, but this in no way guarantees full recognition at a later date.

Upon receipt of a request for recognition the institution is sent a questionnaire designed to elicit detailed information on the course and its host institution. The Board of Education then appoints a panel of three or four persons to visit the institution and carry out the actual assessment. The visits normally last two or three days and include interviews with the institution's senior administration, and with academic staff and students of the librarianship course. The library is inspected, together with any other relevant facilities (such as audio-visual services) and an effort is made to visit classes actually in progress.

The visiting panel later prepares a draft report on the course, which is sent to the institution for correction of any errors of fact. The report is then considered by the Board of Education and a decision is taken on the request for recognition.

Three decisions are possible. The request can be denied if the course clearly fails to meet the standards. On the other hand, if it passes with flying colours recognition would normally be granted for an unlimited period, subject to the Association reserving the right to reassess the course at any time and certainly at least once every seven years. Our goal is to have all library schools in the 'flying colours' category, but unfortunately too many schools still have their colours somewhere near half-mast.

Thus, the most common decision has been for a limited term recognition coupled with a list of improvements which the Board will expect to see made by the time of the next assessment visit. From this you may infer, correctly, that the Board of Education takes the view that the criteria for recognition of courses in librarianship should be interpreted sympathetically and even liberally, rather than according to the strict letter of the law.

The standards, though minimum standards, are a goal to which the schools should be building, and honest and determined progress along that path should be encouraged. In this

spirit, we try to be constructive in our criticism, and supportive of the library school in its efforts to secure from its parent institution the resources it needs for effective teaching.

Also part of our assessment procedure, and especially relevant in the cases where recognition has been given for an unlimited period, is our system of continuously monitoring the schools. Every recognised school is required to submit a brief annual return of information — covering such things as student and staff numbers, staff changes, course changes, finance — and these returns are carefully scrutinised. If it appears that a particular school might be running into difficulties, further more detailed enquiries can be made and, as already noted, the Board reserves the right to re-assess any course at any time should circumstances warrant it.

In summary, therefore, we have devised a cycle of course recognition consisting of:

- Preliminary discussions;
- Provisional recognition (before the first students are enrolled);
- Recognition (unless withdrawn) of the course;
- Requirement for an annual return by each head of school;
- Re-visiting the school when thought necessary by the Board;
- Withdrawal of recognition at any time, should it be considered necessary.

Some problems

This mechanism has proved its value, and generally works well, but it is not without its problems. If the New Zealand Library Association begins to interest itself in course recognition you might benefit from some advance warning of the most likely difficulties.

I have selected six of the more pressing problems which we have faced. There are many more than six, of course, but six will do for now.

I think a fundamental difficulty is that the LAA lacks any legal right to act as an assessor of courses. The academic programs of Australian colleges of advanced education are subject to assessment and accreditation by the various State higher education authorities, and the universities, naturally, have their own rigorous internal mechanisms for ensuring the academic quality of their degrees. Further assessment by a professional group is not always warmly welcomed; indeed I think it is true to say that in a couple of cases our visits and recommendations for improvement have been only grudgingly tolerated by administrators.

Institutions do not need the Association's blessing to conduct courses in librarianship, which places us in a weak position. We are futher weakened by the fact that librarians do not normally need an LAA-approved qualification in order to secure employment. I do not believe we will ever have the power to close down unsatisfactory courses, but we should be doing more to persuade employers to require a recognised qualification for employment. Only in this way, I think, can the professional association strengthen its credibility as the custodian of professional standards.

A second difficulty arises from the fact that we have only a small pool of experienced people on whom we can call to make up our visiting panels. This means that some volunteers are worked really too hard, and that it is sometimes not easy to match the expertise of the panel to the perceived strengths or specialties of the schools. Because the panel members are volunteers, with full-time jobs of their own to attend to, we also sometimes have trouble in scheduling the visits at a time which is convenient to the panel members and to the institution concerned. There have been difficulties, too, in ensuring that the reports on the visits are written up promptly. Finally, this small pool of experienced people includes, not surprisingly, a high proportion of library educators, and there have been some mild criticisms from time to time of our allowing educators to evaluate each other. On the other hand, when we have deliberately tried to involve more practitioners in visiting teams, noises have been made about the undesirability of having non-educators assessing educational programs. The solution would seem to lie in enlarging our pool of competent and experienced visitors, and perhaps in following the American pattern of submitting the panellists' names to institutions for comment before the visit takes place.

A third difficulty we have come across is that, with standards which are deliberately general in nature, interpretation of them by different visiting panels can be inconsistent. In an attempt to overcome this we have tried to include the Association's Executive Director on each visiting panel, the theory being that by virtue of his common membership of all panels he could see each library school in the broader context of the whole group of schools, whereas panel members often tend to see the school in isolation or at least in a narrow perspective. However, the Executive Director is a busy person and he has not found it possible to join every visiting team. So inconsistency does occur from time to time in the interpretation of standards and in the assessment of a school's performance in relation to them. But this is, I believe, a tolerable price to pay for standards which emphasis qualitative rather than quantitative criteria, and which are deliberately framed to permit library schools to be innovative and creative in their approach.

The fourth problem I want to address is the difficulty of ensuring that the assessment procedure takes place in a constructive and co-operative atmosphere. There is sometimes a temptation for the visiting panel to concentrate upon weaknesses and problems, and to give the unintended impression of acting more as inspectors than as a professional group which shares with the library school staff a commitment to the improvement of educational standards and performance. But, of course, the fact remains that our visiting panels are there to assess the school's performance in relation to the standards, and that if performance falls short of reasonable requirements, then comment must be made. Equally, performance well above the expected level should be noticed and praised. This problem of criticism of the Board for pursuing an 'inspectorial' role has been exacerbated by the fact that many of the deficiencies identified in Australian library schools to date have been due, directly or indirectly, to a shortage of high-quality teaching staff. It is therefore difficult to avoid making criticisms which will not be taken personally by some academics.

Fifthly, the shortage of high-quality staff is a problem in itself, with far-reaching implications. It affects some schools more than others, but overall the growth of library schools — both in number and size — has spread the available human and financial resources too thinly. The pool of available talent has been siphoned off until it is now almost dry. I doubt whether more than a few of our library schools have reached the 'critical mass' which Herbert White believes is necessary for educational viability.[6] Unless a library school has sufficient staff of high calibre and of a wide enough range of competencies, it will not be possible for the school to offer the diversity and variety of programs which are essential for quality professional education. The root of this problem is two-fold. With declining support from government, tertiary

institutions are being forced to reduce staff, and their departments of librarianship are not immune from these pressures. But even if funds were suddenly provided, the supply curve for competent, experienced, and highly qualified teaching staff is inelastic, and the people we need are just not there.

I think it is true that, with some schools of marginal educational viability, we might have been more lenient than we normally would in applying some standards. But we have taken the optimistic view that this is a developing situation in which some allowance could be made, and have seldom missed an opportunity to urge the need for staff to upgrade their qualifications and for schools to recruit staff with varied backgrounds in practice. More and more this advice is being heeded, and a particularly noteworthy development is the intention of Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education in Sydney to offer a Master of Library Education degree, designed specifically for the preparation of library educators.

The last of my problems in course recognition can be stated quite simply. It is very expensive. The direct costs are the transportation and living expenses of the visiting panels, plus the cost of bringing the Board of Education together several times a year to receive the reports and deliberate on them. There are significant overhead expenses incurred in the Association's office by way of salaries, postage, telephone calls, and the like. Additionally, of course, the employers of Board members and visitors subsidise the work by absorbing the salary costs of time spent in course recognition activities. It is the policy of the American Library Association that the institutions seeking recognition must pay the costs associated with dealing with their application. I doubt whether Australia is ready for that yet. As I have noted, we are on somewhat shaky ground with some institutions over our right to assess their courses, and I think some doors would be closed to us if we expected them to pay for the privilege of LAA recognition. On the other hand, some members of the Association regret the expenditure which goes into course recognition; one of my jobs is to try to persuade them that although the return from this expenditure is not tangible or easily measurable, it is nonetheless important, and that money spent on ensuring quality education of the next generation of librarians is an investment from which we cannot fail to profit in the long run.

Course recognition and manpower

There are presently sixteen tertiary institutions in Australia teaching librarianship at the base professional level. Between them they offer nearly three dozen different courses; postgraduate and undergraduate, and for 'generalist' librarians and school librarians. A census of library school enrolments in 1977 showed more than 3,000 enrolled and a further 1,000 studying for the LAA's examinations.[7] This latter group is now down to a few hundred, but I would think that an estimate of 3,500 students of librarianship this year would not be far wrong. That is a lot of people.

Attempts to estimate the demand for librarians have usually perished in the quicksands of manpower planning, but there are indications of over-supply in some areas and there is a fairly widespread feeling in the profession that we are in danger of preparing more librarians than the job market can absorb.

As a countermeasure, it is sometimes suggested that the LAA should declare a moratorium on recognising new courses in librarianship and should require recognised courses to limit enrolments. To hold this view is to misunderstand the purpose of course recognition.

The purpose of course recognition is to safeguard the stan-

dards of the profession and the services it provides by ensuring that librarians are educated at an appropriate level. If a course meets the Association's established criteria of educational quality it must be recognised. Further, it is the prerogative of the teaching institutions to determine the numbers of students they will enrol — the numbers enrolled are not relevant to recognition of a course provided the educational quality of the course is maintained.

Course recognition, then, is concerned solely with assessment of educational quality in relation to standards. The Board of Education has firmly rejected all suggestions that our course recognition procedures should be used as a device to control entry into the profession.

Conclusion

After twenty years as a student and then a teacher of librarianship in both Australia and the United States, and now as the officer responsible for guiding the LAA's work in setting standards and assessing courses, I believe that Australian education for librarianship compares more than favourably with that in North America. We are approaching what American baseball players call the Big League. It is a challenging time, and a difficult time, and many problems must be resolved and questions answered if we are to succeed. I do not know the answers — none of us do — but I am comforted by the words of the great American humorist James Thurber who observed that it is better to know some of the questions than all of the answers. Thinking carefully and critically about these questions is the best investment we can possibly make in the future of our profession.

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Current developments in New Zealand libraries

A survey compiled for the Professional Division of the NZLA

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When the Auckland-based committee of the Professional Division took office in February 1978 one of the tasks it was bequeathed by the previous Dunedin-based committee was the possible production of a survey of the state of the library art in New Zealand. The present committee decided that with the limited resources at its disposal, and anticipating consumer resistance to the completion of yet another questionnaire, what could be attempted was a survey of current developments based largely on published material. Accordingly the then secretary, Rosemary Hudson, wrote to a selection of public, academic and special libraries asking for a copy of their most recent annual report. Over sixty responses were received. All the material has been read but, of necessity, not everything can be included in this survey. The other major source of information has been the press cuttings relating to libraries, collected by the National Library and made available through the courtesy of the National Librarian. Since the activities of the National Library as a whole are conveniently summarised in the annual reports presented to Parliament by the trustees and the National Librarian very few items relating to the National Library are included. The survey was originally accepted for publication in February 1979 but delays in the publishing schedule of *New Zealand Libraries* rendered some comments out of date. It has, therefore, been revised to some extent to take account of subsequent developments. Finally, while this report has been compiled on behalf of the Professional Division, any comments are the sole responsibility of the author.